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Romania To Host U.S. Missile Defense Interceptors

By: Luisa Sargsyan

On February 4, 2010 Romania's Supreme Defense Council approved a U.S. offer to deploy U.S. ballistic missile defense interceptors. In the coming years, Washington intends to deploy land- and sea-based versions of the Standard Missile 3 (SM-3) system around Europe as a shield against short- and medium-range missiles fired by Iran.

The new plan was announced last year and replaces the Bush administration's program to deploy ten long-range missile interceptors in Poland and a radar system in the Czech Republic.

Further bilateral negotiations would follow. The two countries will have to sign agreements that would then require parliamentary approval and ratification. The interceptor system will not become operational until 2015.

The U.S. Administration has requested \$8.4 billion in the 2011 fiscal year budget for this program – an increase of more than half a billion dollars from previous years. The requested amount, however, covers programs beyond Europe, such as protecting the U.S. mainland and greater cooperation with Gulf states.

While the fact that Romania will specifically host interceptors on its soil is news, its actual participation in the revamped ballistic missile defense (BMD) is not. U.S. Vice President Joe Biden made a widely publicized trip to Poland, Czech Republic and Romania in October 2009 and talked to all three countries about the revised U.S. plan for the new BMD system in Europe.

Romania is already a key ally of the United States, and home to four U.S. bases that can be used in times of crisis. It has been among the most enthusiastic supporters of the U.S. foreign policy, sending small contingents of troops to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Romanian President **Trian Basescu** said the deployment of the U.S. interceptor system is fully in line with the decisions made at the NATO Bucharest Summit as well as the Kehl Summit that reiterated the principles of indivisible security and solidarity among the NATO allies. Participating in the revised BMD system will only reaffirm the U.S.-Romania alliance, giving this post-communist country an explicit security shield that will expand the scope of its political maneuvering in the region.

Russia's Reaction

U.S. continued emphasis on missile defense has not pleased Russia. The original system, proposed by President Bush, would have put a radar installation in the Czech Republic and interceptors in Poland. Russia opposed the plans, arguing that the system, so close to its border, was a threat to its security and strategic nuclear arsenal. But the criticism diminished after the Obama Administration reconfigured the proposal to use smaller interceptors. In their recent announcements, both U.S. and Romanian officials have stated that Iran, not Russia, is the target and the source of concern.

Russian top-officials have said that the BMD system would upset the strategic balance in the region. They also expressed an opinion that the U.S. missile defense plan is a complicating factor in negotiations with Washington on a new strategic arms reduction accord to replace the 1991 START treaty that expired in December 2009.

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also reminded Washington about the Montreux Convention. It is not clear how the Convention could have any implications on the U.S. missile defense plans in Romania as it regulates military and commercial navigation through the Dardanelles. The Convention, however, does impose a limit of 21 days of presence of non-Black Sea military ships in the Black Sea waters. On the other hand, what is clear is that the Black Sea is a geopolitically strategic location and control over it is essential to both the United States in projecting its influence in the region and Russia whose two oil-producing regions of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan located close to the Black Sea offer a direct route to two Russian energy lines. Thus, any confrontation between the U.S. and Russia would become a major point of conflict.

[U.S. Missile Defenses to be Deployed in Romania](#), [Romania to Host US Defensive Missiles](#), [Biden to Visit Poland, Romania and Czech Republic](#), [Romania Agrees to Host U.S. Missile Shield](#), [Romania Approves US Missile Defense Shield](#), [Romania to Join in U.S. Missile Defense System](#), [Rice Signs Accord Letting U.S. Military Use 4 Bases in Romania](#), [Romanians Accept Plan for Basing of Missiles](#), [Лавров ждет от Вашингтона разъяснений по поводу ПРО в Румынии](#), [U.S., Russia Standoff Takes to the Black Sea](#)

France-Russia Warship Deal Causing Concern

By: Tanah Sullivan

France's decision to sell up to four \$US 750 million Mistral-class assault warships to Russia has generated concern amongst NATO members and former Soviet republics. The deal has not only highlighted Moscow's alleged increasing military ambitions but also what some have perceived as a growing divide in NATO-Russia relations.

The deal, which will see the sale of at least one of France's Mistral warships, with another three ships still being discussed, was reported by *The Washington Post* as a "diplomatic slap" to U.S. Defense Secretary **Robert Gates** as the deal was disclosed during Mr. Gates' visit to Paris. Despite objections from other NATO members, particularly the U.S., France's decision will be marked as the first time a NATO member has sold military weaponry to Russia. *The Washington Times* has reported the response from French Defense Minister Herve Morin, stating that despite understanding the concerns of Central and Eastern European states, France "wants a new relationship" with Russia and thus "needs to go through new exchanges".

Media agencies from the Baltic and former Soviet republics have expressed concern over the deal, with *Times Online* reporting Georgian President **Mikheil Saakashvili** denouncing the deal as it would provide Moscow with the military capabilities of invading any surrounding former Soviet republic or Eastern European state "within hours". Mr. Saakashvili stated that Georgia's application for NATO membership would be an even more pressing issue now, as he believes that his country's successful accession to NATO would be a deterrence against Russian invasion of or attack on Georgia.

Estonia's Foreign Minister, **Urmas Paet**, appealed to France to re-consider the deal and how it would complicate NATO's security, stating that the sale of the Mistral would only lead to a "broken security balance". Mr. Paet also suggested that Moscow's decision would label NATO as an enemy, a concern further exacerbated by Russian President **Dmitry Medvedev**'s signing of Russia's new military policy until 2020.

The new military doctrine, released on February 5, 2010, cites NATO expansion as the main external threat to Russia. The plan focuses on Russia's desire to modernize its armed forces in order to match world standards for advanced weaponry. *Reuters* has reported that NATO has reacted to the plan with some concern, deeming it a direct attempt by Russia to divide the Alliance. **Madeleine Albright**, head of a panel of experts behind NATO's New Strategic Concept, responded to the military doctrine by assuring that NATO is not a threat to Russia, and should not be regarded as so.

[Albright says Russia has nothing to fear from NATO](#), [Medvedev signs Russia's military doctrine](#), [Medvedev approves Russian military doctrine](#), [France snubs U.S., will sell ship to Russia](#), [Georgia denounces French sale of tanks and warships to Russia](#), [An Alarming Franco-Russian Arms Deal](#), [Setting sail into stormy waters](#), [France expects Russian decision soon on buying Mistral warship](#), [Russian navy wants four Mistral warships](#), [Russia and France in warship deal](#)

Operation Moshtarak: A Test for Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan

By: Jonathan Preece

On Sunday ISAF forces operating alongside US Marines and Afghan troops began a much-anticipated military push in southern Helmand province. Operation Moshtarak is focused on the lawless area of Marjah, which serves as a major base for insurgent activity and drug trafficking. The launching of this offensive is part of the larger American military surge in Afghanistan and marks the largest joint operation by allied forces since the 2001 invasion.

About 15,000 NATO and Afghan troops are said to be taking part in the offensive around Marjah, an area with an estimated 80,000 inhabitants and the largest southern town under Taliban control. Operation Moshtarak is significant in that it is being billed as a huge test for NATO's retooled counterinsurgency strategy.

For months, American Marines in Helmand have been sporting t-shirts with the slogan "Just do Marjah" printed on the back. While battle preparations are normally shrouded in silence, NATO officials ignored the usual dictum in the run to Operation Moshtarak. By loudly touting this operation, NATO's military leaders have hoped to encourage civilians to flee the area and prompt insurgents to drop their arms and side against the Taliban.

This aim is consistent with NATO's new counterinsurgency strategy, which places more emphasis on winning the allegiance of Afghans and less on insurgent body counts. In reference to this logic, General Stanley McChrystal recently stated; "[i]f they want to fight, then obviously that will have to be the outcome. But if they don't want to fight, that's fine too...We'd much rather have them see the inevitability that things are changing and just accept that."

After being ferried into Marjah by waves of helicopters on Saturday, NATO forces encountered fierce resistance including heavy gunfire, snipers and numerous improvised explosive devices (IEDs). On Sunday, an American outpost came under heavy fire from surrounding insurgents and, on Monday, while trying to reach a strategically significant bazaar area, American forces were forced to request the assistance of Harrier Jets and attack helicopters. However, with an estimated 35 militants killed, more recent reports indicate that progress has been made since hostilities began over the weekend.

According to the Governor of Helmand Province, Gulab Mangal, "[t]he situation moment by moment is going the way the government has expected. The [NATO] forces are extending their advances from points they have captured and the operation is going on successfully." American Captain Abraham Sipe described the fighting on Tuesday as increasingly sporadic and consisting of hit-and-run tactics. Going into this operation, a huge emphasis was placed on limiting civilian casualties in hopes of winning the "hearts and minds" of Afghans. The publicity surrounding Operation Moshtarak over the last few

weeks did have the positive impact of encouraging thousands of Afghans to flee Marjah for surrounding villages and a large refugee camp outside Lashkar Gah.

However, since the commencement of the operation there have been unintended civilian casualties. On Sunday, NATO rockets reportedly killed 12 civilians – half of them children – in a house on the outskirts of Marjah and on Tuesday three civilians were killed when caught in the crossfire between insurgents and NATO forces. In response to Sunday's civilian casualties, non-lethal smoke rounds were used in place of high explosive shells on Tuesday as marines attempted to disperse Taliban fighters.

However, regardless of the measures taken to limit the risk of harm to Afghan civilians, the success of Operation Moshtarak ultimately depends on how many Afghans in the area are willing to support the central government once hostilities have subsided. Reflecting the firm grip that the Taliban has had on this area, many Afghans in Marjah are fearful that the Taliban will return as authority is transferred to the central Afghan government. Speaking to a reporter with the American Press, one Afghan villager insisted that the Taliban will surely return once the marines move on stating; "Don't take pictures of me or the Taliban will come back to kill me."

With the transfer of security responsibilities set to begin in 2011, the long-term success of this operation depends on the actions of NATO's long criticized Afghan partners. In order to put an "Afghan face" on Operation Moshtarak, Afghan National Army soldiers have been going door to door in order to undermine the perception that the forces moving into Marjah amount to a foreign occupation. President Karzai has also said that he plans on visiting Marjah to talk to locals once security has been established. However, in order to maintain local support experts say that the Afghan government must provide security, deliver services, and root out local corruption. Provincial authorities also have the task of promoting alternative jobs in this rural area almost totally reliant on the illegal opium trade. The first contingent of Afghan National Civil Police officers is set to arrive later this week – the first sign of Kabul's civil authority in nearly a decade. Let the test begin.

[NATO Ministers, commanders advertise planned offensive in Southern Afghanistan, US Marines face fierce resistance in Afghan Assault, NATO missile which killed 12 Afghans 'not off course': general, Marines link up in Afghan Taliban Stronghold, Site of Marjah Government Offices Seized, Afghans, not NATO to decide fate of Marjah offensive, NATO's planned offensive in Afghanistan: get out of the way](#)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Canada Prepared for WMD Terrorism at Olympics

Canada has reportedly deployed 15 000 military, police and security personnel in the Vancouver area in order to deter any potential threats or acts of terrorism. They are also on hand in order to ensure a rapid, effective response to any potential terrorist attacks, including the use of weapons of mass destruction. Regardless of the reported "small chance" of such an attack occurring, it is now the norm for a high-profile event like the Olympics to take such extensive security measures. Read the full text [here](#).

Nuclear 'Constraint' in Russia

Russia's new military doctrine has put some constraints on the use of nuclear weapons. Although this has provided some assurances, there are concerns over the Russian perception that NATO is Moscow's biggest external threat. *The International Relations and Security Network* has provided an in-depth analysis of the security and political implications of Moscow's 2010 doctrine. Read the full text [here](#).

Sources: The Australian, BBC, China Post, CNN, Wall Street Journal, Forbes, Reuters, International Herald Tribune, CBC, The Economist, Time, Wall Street Journal, Ria Novosti, Timesonline.co.uk, Nuclear Threat Initiative, Radio France Internationale

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